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PROGRAM Two for the Road

STATION WMAL Radio

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SUBJECT Subliminal Messages

CHRIS CORE: This is from the Wall Street Journal today, but I think it's something -- well, you'll appreciate it here.

A lovelorn student, a California chiropractor, and hundreds of others pay nearly one dollar a sheet for plain white stationery? They say they're not. They say they are buying super paper which, according to its marketers, is faintly printed with words like "buy," "pay," and "yes." And the sellers say that these are subliminal messages and that they seem invisible at first glance, but they work on the reader's subconscious. Hmmm. See.

Now, selling by mail, two marketers have grossed \$66,000 from 1910 super paper orders since January. A ten-sheet pack of this special paper with the subliminal messages on it costs 9.95. That's almost a dollar a sheet. Real enthusiasts can get it a little bit cheaper. They can get a hundred sheets for 89.95.

Derek Best, a Daytona Beach, Florida free-lance writer and his partner Robert Furner, a guitar maker and carpenter, say they hit upon the idea while sitting around the pool one day and thumbing through books on subliminal advertising.

And customers include a Louisiana State University student who's trying to keep his girlfriend's affections. I assume he has the "yes" paper. A California chiropractor who uses the paper to collect delinquent bills and invite patients to come back to the office.

And the partners tell buyers that the subliminal messages will make the reader feel positive about the written message that's on top of the subliminal message.

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BILL TRUMBULL: Just one word a page now, huh?

CORE: I guess. One message a page.

TRUMBULL: It wouldn't say "yes" and "pay."

CORE: No. I think you have to make up your mind whether you want "pay" or "yes."

TRUMBULL: You could have "love" in there, or something.

CORE: Probably.

But are the subliminal messages really there? Do they really exist? A Florida print shop says that it does indeed print the subliminal messages on super paper. If so, the printer apparently isn't wasting much ink, because scientists at Georgia State Crime Laboratory and the Georgia Institute of Technology examined super paper under infrared light, ultraviolet light, oblique light, infrared luminescence, and a high-powered microscope; and they say, "If anything is there, we don't have the power to detect it."

When told that some people just can't see the messages, Mr. Best suggests it's a problem with their imaginations, and they should just relax when they look at the paper.

Informed of the test results, the chiropractor that had been buying this says he hasn't seen the words either, but he insists that the paper has gotten results. And he says he plans to order more. So they can't find it on there, but they say it works.

Well, the reason I bring it up is I see a whole new line for the Trumbull and Core industries.

TRUMBULL: Aha.

CORE: Send a subliminal radio message to use. Now, we don't even have to tell the sales department. You can deal directly with us on this. And the message is...

TRUMBULL: Eliminate the middleman, right?

CORE: Right. And the messages will not be during the ads that you hear, but we'll send out subliminal messages that you won't hear, but they'll work on the subconscious. And I just wanted to prove it right now.

TRUMBULL: Does it work?

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CORE: That it'll work.

TRUMBULL: Okay.

CORE: All right. We're not going to say anything, and you see if you can pick up any idea, right?

TRUMBULL: Okay.

CORE [whispering]: Send Trumbull and Core money. Send Trumbull and Core money.

Now, see, we didn't say anything.

TRUMBULL: No.

CORE: But somewhere out there people may have picked up a little message.

TRUMBULL: I couldn't hear a thing.

CORE: No. Nothing was said.

TRUMBULL: I hate dead air like that.

CORE: I know. But it was to prove a point. In this case, this was in the interest of science.

TRUMBULL: Gee, I hope it works.

CORE: I hope so too.